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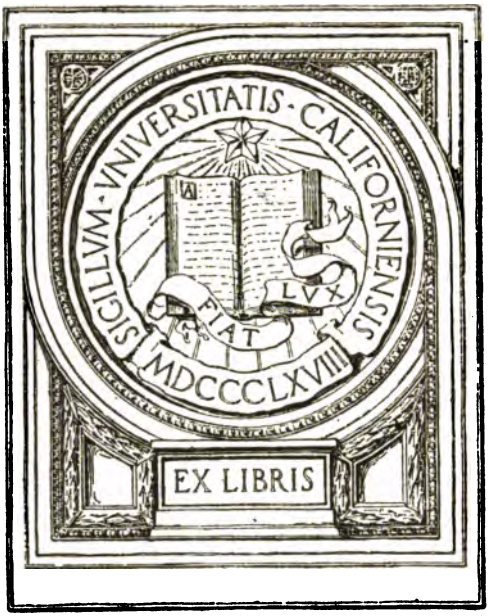
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EDGAR ALLAN POE

EDGAR ALLAN POE

BY

HANNS HEINZ EWERS

Translated from the German by

ADÈLE LEWISOHN

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons for Hanns Heinz Ewers' influence upon German verse and prose is his wonderful sense of the value of words, of their colors and sounds, which he shares with the masters of all times. His instinct leads him toward the strange, the unexpected. The actions in his books take place in the human soul—that land of dreams which unites our soul to the world-soul.

The conception of the "Alraune" or "Mandragora," his most famous book, antedates Pythagoras. It is a fable of the plant that shrieks when plucked. Ewers combines this story with the science of our times and creates a tale of a strange passion, with no intent to intoxicate but rather to explain. This book has affected not only the literature of Germany, but the literature of France, where Ewers lived for years and where he collaborated with Marc Henry, a French modernist, in bringing out some French fairy tales, "Le Joli Tambour" and the dramatic poem, "Les Yeux Morts," now set to music by d'Albert.

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I cannot quote from any of his poems for they are as yet untranslated. In the series called "The Soul of Flowers," in a manner so simple as to be almost ingenuous, he has declared in exquisite language that if the rose is the flower of love in all the universe it is because this thought caused it to become what it is.

His "Sorcerer's Apprentice, or, the Devil Hunters" is a powerful performance. A community of peasants in an Italian mountain village repeat among themselves the whole of the passion of Christ until the final crucifixion. A simple peasant girl is hypnotized into believing herself a savior and taking the sins of the world upon her shoulders. Of this work we can truly say that nothing that is human is alien to it.

Ewers was born at Düsseldorf in 1871. His father was a painter of no mean ability. His mother is a woman of great force of character who translated several English books into German and who has always deeply influenced her son. Ewers has lived in almost all the countries of the world. His "India and I" is a record of his life in India and that land herself is presented to us. Her holy temples, her brown-faced dancers with their swaying limbs and open arms, her incense, her idols and her fakirs. All these are given new

expression as seen through the doubting yet loving and always personal eyes of Hanns Heinz Ewers.

His conclusion is that the occult is so deeply rooted in our spiritual natures that the mind is our actual body, and the imagination our real mind—that as a phenomenon of nature there exists nothing more holy or more spiritual than the carnal.

At a time when Poe was comparatively little understood Ewers was his most sympathetic German interpreter. He is able to mirror the soul of Poe because they are intellectual kinsmen. Both are at home in "the misty mid-region of Weir," both dwell "out of Space, out of Time." Both have explored the realm of Horror. In fact, Ewers has gone beyond Poe because to him was revealed the mystery of sex; to Poe sex always was a sealed book. However, his attitude toward Poe, as shown in this little essay, is almost that of a worshipper.

ADÈLE LEWISOHN.

New York
December, 1916.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

EDGAR ALLAN POE

IN THE ALHAMBRA

LIGHTLY my feet tread over the grey stairs of the old path that I had so often followed to the Alhambra's sacred groves. The Gate of the Pomegranates, behind which I flee to escape from time, opens wide to my ardent desires so gently does one wander into the land of dreams,—where the elm trees murmur, where the fountains babble, where from out of the laurel bushes hundreds of nightingales sing, there I can best think of my poet.

* * *

One ought not to do it. Really not.

One ought not read any mere book about the artist one loves. One is sure to be disappointed—how can the dominie speak of God? One must go about it carefully, very, very carefully.

It ought to be done in this way:

You love Firdusi—Goethe wrote about him. You do not know Goethe? Very well. First read everything Goethe ever wrote before you read what he has to say about the Persian poet, and then only, after you absolutely understand the man who writes about your favorite, only then decide whether you will read what he has to say about him—In this way you will not be disappointed.

Never read what Tom and Dick write about the artist you love; even if Tom and Dick happen to be stars of the first magnitude, and if the poet you love is altogether a tiny speck of nebula—*do not read them!* Do not read them before you know Tom and Dick absolutely; until you know that they have a right to sit in judgment on your artist.

I did not do it in that way. I have some drops of a heavy fluid in my blood from some source or another, unbearable German thoroughness. From a sort of sense of duty, I thought, before writing of the poet

you love, read what others before you have written about him—I thought—perhaps—

Thereupon I read much about Edgar Allan Poe, and I am so disappointed—so very much disappointed. There was only one whose mind could comprehend him. There was only Charles Baudelaire.

Baudelaire, who created art out of hashish. How could he do otherwise than comprehend Poe, he who moulded works of imperishable beauty out of alcohol and laudanum!

* * *

Now I must forget all that the others said. I must forget the dreadful Griswold, whose whole biography of Poe is nothing else than an outburst of venom. "He *drank,* he *drank, phew, he drank!*" And the still more horrible Ingram. I must forget this fool, who saved my Poet's honor by stammering, "*He did not drink, really, he did not drink at all.*"

Quickly before I forget them, I must mark down the dates which they have given me:

Edgar Allan Poe—born on January 19, 1809, in Boston. Irish family, long ancestry, Norman, Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Italian blood. In 1816 he went to England with his foster-parents. A few years at boarding school in Stoke-Newington—1822 returned to America, 1826 studied at Richmond, then in Charlottesville. 1827 went on a trip to Europe with unknown adventures: 1830 Cadet at West Point—1834 editor of the Southern Literary Messenger in Richmond. 1836 married his cousin, Virginia Clemm. He wrote— He lived alternately in New York, Philadelphia, Richmond and Fordham. Things went very badly with him. "He drank," says Griswold. "He did not drink," says Ingram. He died October 7th in the hospital for the poor at Baltimore, forty years of age.

So, these are the most insignificant dates. Now I can forget them also.

* * *

Yet how difficult it is. Very slowly I walk through the avenue of the elms up to

the King's palace. To the left I turn in and stride through the mighty Tower Gate of Justice. I am delighted with the hand * lifted above me to ward off the spell of the evil eye. I think my priests will remain outside. Now, I have reached the top—alone in these familiar rooms.

I know very well where I wish to go. Quickly through the courtyard of the myrtles, through the Hall of the Mocarabians into the courtyard of the Twelve Lions,—to the left, through the Hall of the Two Sisters, and through that of the ajimezes † I go. Now I arrive,—in the balcony of Lindaraxa's Tower, where Boabdil's mother Ayxa lived. I sit on the windowsill, looking out upon the old cypress trees.

How difficult it is to forget. There are my priests walking in the garden. Two

* A gigantic hand graven on the arch of this gate, whose five fingers designate the principal commandments of the creed of Islam, and which, according to a legend, wards off evil.

† "Ajimezes" is a Spanish term for small arched windows supported by central pillars; he probably refers to one of the smaller courts famous for the symmetry of these windows.

English hypocrites, round hats, short pipes, black coats, with Baedekers in their hands.

"He drank," hisses one.

"O, no, he really did not drink," pipes the other.

I would like to knock their heads together. I would like to shout to them. "Away, you rats,—away. Here sits one who is dreaming of the artist he loves! He sang in your language—and you know nothing of him—"

Presently they are gone, of course. I am alone again!

* * *

He drank—he did not drink. That is the way the Anglo-Saxons dispute about their poets. They permit Milton to starve; they steal his whole life's work from Shakespeare. They delve into Byron's and Shelley's family histories with crooked fingers; they calumniate Rossetti and Swinburne; lock Wilde into prison and point their finger at Charles Lamb and Poe—because they drank!

After all, I am happy that I am a German. Germany's great men were permitted to be immoral—that is, not quite exactly as moral as the good middle class and the priests. The German says: "Goethe was our great poet." He knows that he was not so very moral but he does not take that fact too much to heart. The Englishman says: —"Byron was immoral, therefore he *cannot* have been a great poet." Only in England could Kingsley—that offensive preacher of morality—have uttered that remark about Heine, which has become a familiar quotation—"Do not speak of him,—he was a wicked man."

If, however, it is unalterable, if the nations on all sides acknowledge and love the "immoral" English poets, the Englishman is at last forced to speak—then he lies. He does not renounce his hypocrisy; he simply says: "Later investigation has proved that the man was not at all immoral,—he was highly moral, quite pure and innocent." In this fashion the English have "saved the honor" of Byron. It will not be long ere

they turn a Saul Wilde into a Paul. Thus in the case of Poe, an Ingram followed a Griswold with the "Oh, no, he really did not drink."

The English are now permitted to appreciate Edgar Allan Poe, since it is officially attested that he was a moral being.

But we, who make not the slightest claim to middle class morality,—we love him, even if he drank. Yes, even more we love him because of his drink, because we know that just from this poison which destroyed his body pure blossoms shot forth, whose artistic worth is imperishable.

How works of art are created is not the affair of the layman,—that is the affair of the artist alone—no one may venture a word or even pass judgment on a final sentence. Only the few whom he permits a glimpse into his mode of creating because they love him, may silently look on—only they can tell.

Wilde tells the fairy tale of the marvelously beautiful rose which blossomed from the heart's blood of the dying nightingale.

The student who plucked it looked and wondered; never before had he seen such a wondrous blood-red rose. But he knew not how it had originated.

We marvel at the *Odontoglossum grande*,* the most splendid of all orchids. Is it less beautiful because it feeds on insects which it slowly tortures to death in the most fearful manner? We rejoice at the splendid lilies in the Park of Cintra. We marvel, —we have never seen them so large and white. What does it matter that the crafty gardener does not water them with natural water, but with guano, with selected artificial manure?

The time will come when the highroads of our sober art, only scantily lighted by the melancholy lamps of alcohol, will be ridiculed. A time for those to whom intoxication and art are inseparable ideas, who, as a matter of fact will only recognize the distinction in the art brought forth by intoxication. Then only will one give to these pathfinders the high places they deserve, to Hoffmann, Baudelaire, Poe—the artists who

were the first to work understandingly with intoxicants.

Let us be honest! Is there any artist who can entirely abstain from the use of intoxicants? Do they not all take their little poisons: tea, tobacco, coffee, beer, or whatever it may be? Must not the mind be "poisoned" in order to produce works of art? Because if the artist is not poisoned by means of his body, he is in other ways.

For there are quite a number of other ways.

Art and Nature are always opposed to one another. A man who lives a purely abstemious life, physically and mentally,—whose ancestors for many generations have also lived just as abstemiously, so that his blood is not, as it is with all of us, poisoned, can never become an artist, unless some divine power provides him with other sensations, capable of awaking ecstasy. But those also act as a poison upon the spirit. Nature and Art are the deadliest enemies; where one reigns the other becomes impossible.

What is the meaning of the word "artist" in its *truest sense?* A pioneer of culture in the newly discovered land of the unconscious.

How few are worthy to be called artists under this lofty definition of that proud title! E. T. A. Hoffmann deserves it, and Jean Paul and Villiers and Baudelaire—and certainly also *Edgar Allan Poe;* this much even the Griswolds must concede to the artist who, in so many of his stories, entered that secret country of the soul, of which no one before him, and least of all the scientists, had the slightest presentiment.

The eternal land of our longing lies dreamily before us in grey misty clouds,—the vast land of the unknown. The beggar lies huddled in the warm sunshine,—the contented town folks hug their fire places.

But there are people whose tormenting desires are so great that they must emerge from the realm *which we know. Robur et æs triplex* must protect their breasts when they leave the sunny land of the known, when they steer through the grey murder-

ous floods to Avalon. And many, many perish shamefully without having cast even a single glance behind the clouds. Only a few can complete the journey. They discover a new land,—accept it in the name of a new culture; they have extended the borders of consciousness a little further.

The artists are these first explorers. After them come the hordes of expeditions of discoverers in order to survey and investigate the country—land registrars and rent collectors—men of science.

Now it is certain that the so-called poisons, which we call narcotics, are as potent as other means to lead us beyond the threshold of the conscious. If one succeeds in getting a firm footing in this "other world," exchanging the metaphysical for something positive, one creates a new work of art, and is, in the noblest sense, an artist.

It may be necessary here to accentuate that quality of wisdom which insists, of course, that there can be no idea of creation in intoxication. Or, on the other hand, that no intoxicant in the world can develop in

a man qualities which he does not possess.

The Griswolds and the Ingrams could take any amount of wine, could smoke any amount of opium, eat any amount of hashish, nevertheless they would still be unable to create works of art.

But the intoxication caused by narcotics is liable, under certain conditions, when accompanied by other causes, to create a state of ecstasy later on, and in this state of ecstasy every one produces the highest that his intelligence is capable of conceiving.

Edgar Allan Poe drank. And, as with all of us, his body proportionately reacted unfavorably against the poison of the alcohol, deadened as it was by the drink-habits of generations of ancestors; so he drank heavily. He got drunk. But he got drunk purposely, he did it in order to get the drunkard's understanding, from which he later on, perhaps years later, could create new *art values*. Such intoxication is no delight, it is an unbearable torture; consciously desired only by him on whose brow the living mark of art is branded.

Is there a more shameful lie than that remark of the banal: "Artistic creation is not work—it is a pleasure?" He who says this and the great public which thoughtlessly repeat it, have never felt the breath of ecstasy, which is the only condition demanded by art. And this ecstasy is always a torture, even when—in rare cases—the cause which produced it, was one of rapture.

They say that it is with joy that the mother cat brings forth her young—but the offspring are only poor blind little kittens. So may the weekly contributor to the *Gotham Gazette,* so may the versifier of a "Berlin by Night" sheet, put his lines on paper with joy—a work of art is never born without pain.

* * *

I wandered forth again—through the majestic palace of the fifth Roman Emperor of Germany, who bore the name of Karl, right through the mighty portico, up through the long avenue of white blooming acacias, through the meadows blooming with many

thousand blue irises. The Tower of the Princesses I had unlocked for me, where one time the Sultan's daughters Zayda, Zorayda, and Zorahayda at the window secretly overheard the songs of the captured Christian knights.

I gaze at the valley beyond the hill from which Boabdil at parting sent his last sigh to lost Granada. I glance at the garden of the Generalife. I can clearly see the many hundred year old cypresses, under whose shadow the last Moorish king's wife, Hamet, came to a tryst with the handsomest of the Abencerrages, which was to prove so fatal.

Here each stone relates a legend, that is sadly fading away.

Deep below in the valley lies the road which leads up to the City of the Dead. A pair of black goats graze on the green slopes. Back below the Tower of the Prisoners, sits a tattered toll-taker in front of his dirty cave. Long-eared rabbits graze about him, —seven roosters, already robbed of crest and tail feathers, for the impending battle, peck about the ground or fly at each other,

and far in the East the snow of the wild Sierra Nevada glows purplish red.

A troop of ragged lads travel through the Valley—Two are carrying a little child's coffin on their shoulders—open according to the Spanish custom—another shoulders the cover. The coffin is very simple, three yellow boards and two smaller ones. But within lie flowers, many flowers, red, yellow—and white and blue flowers—from under which the waxen pale little face framed in black hair looks forth. No priest, no relatives, not even father nor mother are in the procession—six tattered lads.—

But among so many gay flowers the dead child reposes in such fresh blossoming fragrance. How good that they did not close her eyes! Now she looks forth, interestedly from out of the variegated flowers—up to the old Moorish King's Palace—peers out of the colored splendor, the little dead girl so satisfied and happy, as she certainly never was in life.

Edgar Allan Poe should have sat here. How he would have dreamed; how the gay

legends would have flown about his brow on light wings! And he would have built a new Alhambra, in words of bronze, which would have outlasted the mighty towers of the Nasserites by many centuries.

Here then other means perhaps would have created for him a state of ecstasy. He would probably not have drunk. But he was there in New England, his poor poet's soul penned in between realist prose writers, while at the same time Washington Irving, that model of English conventionality, was allowed to dream under the magic spell of Alhambra moonshine! And his "Tales of the Alhambra" became world renowned!

Day after day I see strangers enter the sacred places, in their hands Baedekers; in their coat pockets copies of Irving's book. Just as they read the "Last Days of Pompeii" in the House of Vettii or that of Dionysos! Did the few beauties contained in these books, which undeniably exist, emanate from Lord Lytton or Irving's mind? O, no, a breath from the Roman City of the Dead, of the Moorish fairy palace poured

through their souls even though they were not poets, even though they were only little middle class scribblers. Neither Bulwer nor Irving created these beauties, but Pompeii and the Alhambra in spite of them.

* * *

Poe's glowing longing knew nothing of all this. To emerge from his own self, to awaken within him an ecstasy which could transport him from all the familiar surroundings which shut him in, there remained for him but one medium. Aside from very unimportant happenings, little calculated to induce ecstasy, this most unfortunate of poets once only received from the outer world the Muse's Kiss; through his beautiful beloved wife, Virginia Clemm. May the Moralist call this intoxication holy, godlike, may he call the Poet's other ecstasy, which resulted from the use of alcohol, then from opium, as unholy and fiendish; that is not of interest to us. For the artistic values which are brought forth by these are no less splendid.

The godly ecstasy, however, was hardly

less torturing for the inspired one than the infernal one. A Hell was to him what Paradise is to others,—a well beloved, a blessed Hell, but the flames of which nevertheless scorched. For Virginia,—to whose dying eyes we are indebted for Morella, and Ligeia, Berenice and Lenore,—was doomed before she had given her hand to the Poet. He knew that she had consumption, that the glowing red of her cheeks lied, knew that from the depth of her liquid shimmering eyes the inexorable sickness grinned forth. When at night he stroked the beloved locks he knew: "So many days yet she will live," and the next morning again "Another day less." It was a dying woman who kissed his lips, a dying woman, whose lovely head rested next to his at night. When he awoke disturbed by the coughing and rattling in her panting lungs—the white linen seemed to him a shroud, the cold drops on her brow, the sweat of death, a lingering death, lasting for years, a visible slow fading of the beloved—this was the only "happiness" of this most unhappy of all poets.

Yes, this beautiful doomed wife, called forth emotions,—but they were emotions of fear, of silent repressed pain—of despair in a laughing disguise; a Paradise of Torture. Read the most beautiful tales Virginia sowed in his soul; you will feel a breath of the unspeakable torture in which they were born.

Before the last threads of life were torn asunder, and the silent woman lowered into the grave, Edgar Allan Poe wrote his masterpiece "The Raven"; and the state of ecstasy which brought forth this poem, which has no equal in the whole literature of the world, (I would like to shout this fact into the faces of the English hypocrites), was caused by the despair of his bleeding heart for this dying one, as well as by the common, low intoxication of the wine cup.

Each alienist who has specialized in the effects of intoxication, will readily recognize those parts of "The Raven" which sprang from delirium with absolute certainty. It is quite simple for the psychologist to trace the other rapture which the artist owes to

Virginia, his "lost Lenore." And here let us compare the sincere, marvelously clear essay which Poe wrote about the creation of this poem. Each stanza, each line, each single sound of words, he motivates in startlingly simple logic; it is almost as though he wanted to demonstrate a geometrical problem. It may be true that the main subject, the ecstasy, and its origin in holy and —O, such very unholy, intoxication,—is not mentioned by any word.—This essay was written for the New England readers of magazines,—how could they have understood a poet who spoke of ecstasy? The workmanship—the purely technical part, that which signifies the art, that which is supported by knowledge—that was never demonstrated by any Poet as clearly and convincingly as in this essay. A veritable text book of poetry, of one master piece.—Certainly as a guide the Philistine cannot use it; for the artist, however, it is the most important book of instruction existing. He may learn from it that godlike intoxication alone does not create an absolute work of

art, that the common work, the despised technique, the reflection and polishing, the weighing and filing, are quite as indispensable for its perfection.

Not the mighty mind alone of the Arabian architect created the glorious Alhambra.—Masons, mule-drivers, gardeners, and painters,—each brought his little part to bear.

Edgar Allan Poe was the first poet who spoke with such candor of literary labor, of the craftsman's work alone. In this, and probably only in this, his attitude was that of the American. As such he stood, and what is more, at the threshold of modern thought, he ranks as the pioneer—a brilliant demonstration of the intrinsic value of this Artist, who speaks only of technique and with no word mentions intuition which the amateur always carries on his tongue. Perhaps if he had written for other readers in his magazine, he might have gone one step further, and have told them about the technique of intoxication.

Never before him did any one so dismember his own work of art, and dissect it to its last shred. The divine breath dictated by the Bible haunts the faith of the masses until our very day and the artists by the "grace of the Lord," were careful not to destroy this fable of inspiration. When the Holy Ghost touched *them,* they swooned,—composed, wrote poetry,—and gave birth to more or less immaculate children of spirit. That was so pretty, so comfortable, that certainly some of the great artists would gladly have believed in this secret consecration. "Drunk with godliness" was said of the Thracian poet, even were he as sober as Socrates. This thought, which in its Dionysic origin coincides with our modern view of intoxication and ecstasy, according to the later point of view, received the Lord's anointment, and, like so many other clear thoughts, which it was able to obscure, was taken up in the Christian conception of life with great enthusiasm. All the beautiful phrases of the Knights of Olympus, of the Kiss of the

Muses, of the divine ecstasy, of the divine predestination of artists—by which we, Heaven be praised, are no longer impressed! —have their origin in this.

It required courage to dissipate these sparkling mists; few, very few myths about world's literature can stand such a relentless decomposition. But because Poe in his Raven created a work of art so clean, so finished, he could risk such a step. The petty, the ridiculous and absurd, which otherwise draw the sublime into the dust, can do nothing against this perfection.

My glance falls on the wall coverings of this hall. In the style of Mudéjar, the Arabesque and Coptic sentences become entwined.

The eye is never surfeited with these fantastic harmonies. Now this marvel of Arabic art is composed of plaster—just common plaster,—how laughable, how paltry, how absurd! But though composed of miserable plaster this colossal work of art loses nothing of its sublimity. The ordinary medium exhales the breath of the spirit that in-

spired it. Art triumphs over nature, and this art is so great that the recognition of the common medium is superfluous.

Poe did not need this time-honored coat of lies. He saw that it was threadbare and torn and boldly threw it aside. In the few words with which he characterizes the understanding of intuition in "Eureka" as "the conviction arising from those inductions or deductions of which the processes are so shadowy as to escape our consciousness, elude our reason, or defy our capacity of expression"—there was a clearer recognition of the ways of artistic creation than any of his contemporaries had. While the Poet-philosopher therefore in opposition to the so-called "Intuition" of philosophy—especially in reference to Aristotle, and Bacon, with whom he disputes makes allowance for this, which the latter denies; he at the same time determines its value in a limited untheological modern sense. This shows the gigantic spirit of this foremost being endowed with a modern mind, that he, the romanticist, the dreamer, still is a worshipper

of logic, who never lost the ground beneath his feet.

Edgar Allan Poe was the first one openly to acknowledge the technique of thought—and anticipated Zola's "genius is application" by decades. And this same Edgar Allan Poe wrote in his preface to Eureka—"To the few who love me and whom I love—to those who feel rather than to those who think—to the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as in the only realities,—I offer this book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller, but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth, constituting it true. To these I present the composition as an Art-Product alone,—let us say a Romance; or, if I be not urging too lofty a claim, as a Poem.

"What I here propound is true:—therefore it cannot die; or if by any means it be now trodden down, so that it die, it will rise again to the 'Life Everlasting.'"

So Poe, absolutely independent of Gautier, sets up his Art for Art's Sake principle,—greater than Gautier who only saw

beauty with the eyes of the painter, he places his demand. And he is also deeper than Gautier, to whom the outward form alone was a manifestation of beauty. Beauty first creates truth for him into truth—whose right to existence without beauty he denies. —This is the greatest demand ever made of Art, and as this demand can be fulfilled only in desires, dreams to him are the only reality, and he denies all real value to active life. Here, too, Poe the Romanticist, is a pathfinder—and is the first one to disclose what is called "Modern Thought."

If he anticipated Zola's coined expression of technical production, if he furthermore set up the Parnassian art principle independent of this, he bridged the gap of half a century and made a demand so ultra-modern that, even today, only a small part of the advanced spirits understand it in its whole radical magnitude.

The fertility of the literature of the cultured peoples will through Poe's spirit first attain full development in this century. The past one judged him by a few outward

trivialities, a hawing and hemming, which certainly brought a fortune to Jules Verne and Conan Doyle, the fortunate imitators. It is certain that the starving poet only wrote these things for his daily bread. The Sea and Moon Journeys of Gordon Pym and Hans Pfaal, etc., also several of his detective stories as, for instance "The Murder in The Rue Morgue" "The Purloined Letter" "The Gold Bug," were certainly called into existence only by the desire to have warmth, food and drink. For Poe knew hunger. Therefore he wrote those things, as he also did translations, and worked at all possible sorts of scientific books. Surely, each single story, even the weakest, far surpasses any adventure of the eminent Sherlock Holmes.—Why does the great public, and especially the English speaking public, in spite of all this, swallow Doyle's ridiculous detective stories with enthusiasm, and lay those of Poe aside?

Nothing is easier to understand. Poe's characters are like those of Dostoevski's, so real, his composition is so faultless, so holds

the imagination of the reader without possibility of escape in its nets, that even the bravest cannot resist a shudder, an agonizing, murderous shudder, which resembles a cruel nightmare.

In the works of popular imitators this fear is nothing more than a pleasant sensation, which not for one moment permits the reader to doubt the outcome of the farce. The reader always knows that this is all stupid nonsense; in this case he is standing above the narrator. This is the author's intention. Poe, however, grasps the reader, hurls him down the precipice and flings him into hell, so that the poor simpleton loses all sense of hearing and seeing, and is completely at sea. Therefore the good citizen who wants to sleep quietly, prefers the stage hero of Baker Street, and draws the line at Poe's gigantic nightmares. One sees that even when he desired to be middle class, where he desired to write for the great masses, his aim is still too high. He addressed middle class intellect and imagined himself to be speaking to his equals: To

carry his brain to market he ran about from publisher to publisher—to those who wanted to buy straw.

* * *

But a future time will be ripe for the Poet's gifts. We already recognize the path which leads from Jean Paul and E. T. A. Hoffmann to Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe, the only path which art, the outcome of culture, can take! Already we have several efforts in this direction.

This art will no longer be confined within national bounds. It will be conscious of itself as was Edgar Allan Poe conscious that it does not exist for "its own people" but alone for the thin ranks of cultured taste, be these of Germanic or Japanese, of Latin or Jewish nationality.

No artist ever worked for "his people," alone, and yet almost every artist desired to do so and believed he had accomplished this. The great masses in Spain know absolutely as little of Velasquez and Cervantes as the English working man does of Shakespeare and Byron, as the French do of Rabelais and

Molière, as the Hollander does of Rembrandt and Rubens. The German *masses* have not the slightest notion of Goethe and Schiller. They do not even know the names of Heine and Bürger. The series of questions or the answers made by the soldiers to the questions put to the soldiers of certain regiments: "Who was Bismarck? Who was Goethe?" should at length open the eyes of the most optimistic. A whole world divides the cultured man of Germany from his countrymen, whom he meets daily in the street; a nothing—a canal—separates him from the cultured element in America.

Heine felt this and preached this openly to the people of Frankfort. Edgar Allan Poe expressed it even more distinctly. Most artists, however, and the learned and cultivated of all nations had such a slight understanding of this, that unto this day Horace's fine "Odi Profanum" is misinterpreted. The artist who wishes to create for his own people alone attempts the impossible, and for this purpose he very often neglects something attainable and greater,

the possibility of creating for the whole world. Above the German, above the British and French, there stands a higher nation. The nation of culture! To create for that is alone worthy of the artist. Here on this soil Poe was at home even as Goethe though in a different, equally conscious, but less modern sense.

* * *

Very slowly I pace about in the park of the Alhambra under the old elms which Wellington planted. On all sides fountains murmur, mingling their voices with the sweet songs of hundreds of nightingales. Among the turreted towers I walk in the luxuriant vale of the Alhambra. To whom does this magic palace, this garden of dreams belong? To the Spanish nation of beggars which I despise? To the mob of strangers with their guide-books in their hands, whose path I avoid by ten paces at least? O, no! This palace, this garden of dreams belongs to me, and to the few who are qualified to absorb these beauties, whose breath brings life to these rocks, to these shrubs. Whose

spirit can transform all this beauty into truth? Everything about me, and all else which is beautiful on this earth, is the sacred inviolable property of the cultured people, who stand above all other nations. That Nation is the true ruler, the true possessor. No other master is tolerated by beauty. To understand this means to understand the world. Edgar Allan Poe was the first to do this.

I sit on the stone bench on which Aboul Haddjâdj once dreamed. A fountain bubbles up before me—and falls into the round marble basin. I know quite well why the Sultan sat here alone in the twilight: Oh, it is so very sweet to dream here!

There was once a Poet who recorded nothing but conversations with the dead. He chatted with all the seven sages, and with all the kings of Nineveh, and with Egyptian priests and Thessalian witches, with Athenian singers, with Roman generals and with King Arthur's Round Table. At last he had no desire left to speak with any living being. The dead are so much

more interesting. Oh, one can speak with them, certainly. All dreamers can do so and all those who believe in dreams, as in the only reality.

Did I not wander today with him I love, through the halls of the Palace? Did I not reveal to the dead Poet part of the beauty of the world, never seen by mortal eye? Now he stands here beside me, leaning against the elm. "Only ask me," he says.

He seems to feel how my eyes caress and question him—and he speaks. At times the words drop clearly from his lips; at times his voice ripples from the fountain; it sings from out of the throats of the nightingales and rustles in the leaves of the old elms. So wise are the dead.

"Do not touch upon my poor life," says Edgar Allan Poe. "Question Goethe who was a prince and could afford six stallions with which to tear through the world. I was alone."

I do not remove my eyes from him.

"Tell those who love you and whom you love."

"The life I lived, I have forgotten," he said. "O, not only since my death, as the small mortals think—each day I forgot to remember the morrow. Otherwise how could I have continued to live?—My real life though, my life of dreams, you know." . . . From the ground a light mist glides through the evening, a sweet cool breeze fans my brow. Certainly: the life of his dreams was very well known to me, he gave it to me as well as to the world. And slowly this pageant of his creations which represents his life glides past me.

* * *

William Wilson. Of course it is Poe. So truly Poe that the dominie Griswold calmly gives the year of Wilson's birth—1813—as that of the Poet's. The boy rules in the old boarding school of Stoke-Newington over all his fellow students; only not over one—the other Wilson, himself. And he whose inherited frivolous tastes again and again turned the boy, the youth and the man into a vagabond, cannot rid himself of his conscience, of that other Wilson—himself.

In spite of his conscience his tendency to crime tosses him about the world, and over and over again he convicts himself.* Thus the poet's boyhood and his youth were poisoned. His inherited sense of good and evil which had been more strongly developed by his education is so overstrong in him that he cannot disentangle himself from his conflicting emotions, and is almost wrecked by them. Each little wrong he has committed takes on colossal proportions in his dreams and plagues and torments him. Still more, sins of conscience, entertaining the idea of evil alone, become a reality in his dreams. He sees himself as the hero of all his terrible tales. The sins of the fathers are avenged upon the last scion of the race; like Frederick of Metzengerstein in his own story, he himself rides through all the flames of hell, on his devilish steed.

* * *

. . . How the elm trees murmur. And I

* His biographer, the Rev. Mr. Griswold, nevertheless remarks, that in all literature there is no other instance in which one so utterly misses every vestige of conscience, as in the case of Poe.

hear the voice of the accursed from out of the winds:

"Had I not been a poet, I probably should have become a murderer, a cheat, a thief, a robber and a trickster."

The leaves of the elms sing and again a voice whispers:

"And perhaps I would have been happier."

* * *

And I think,—who can tell?—Has there ever been a criminal whose deeds created a martyrdom for him such as the Poet felt for crimes which he had never committed? For Poe in his dreams, which were his only actual life, is not only the murderer, but also the victim. He immures his enemy while still alive in a cellar. And it is he himself who is walled in. ("The Cask of Amontillado.") He murders, because he must, the man with the eagle eye,—he buries him under the planks, and the heart which is beating below this, and which at last discloses the deed, is again his own. ("The Tell-Tale

Heart.") We find the double of William Wilson everywhere.

Rarely has an artist stood so little outside of that which he created, never did one so live within his works. A German, a Frenchman would have more easily emancipated himself from this fatal idea of morality. The Poet, however, by inheritance and education suffered from a piety which enslaved his soul, and from which he could never entirely free himself. Only later in life could he assume an objective attitude; he never stood entirely outside of all good and evil. The old English curse oppressed him, no torture was spared him; this poor soul had to endure all the maddest tortures of hell, the cup of which Brueghel, Jean van Bosch and Goya emptied unto the last dregs.

Had he been a criminal in reality instead of in thought, had he ended his days on the gallows instead of in the charity hospital, his life would have been poverty-stricken and miserable—but not as terrible as it was.

But temples arise from fields strewn with

skulls, fields of lilies blossomed from blood-stained meadows. And we blessed ones enjoy the wonderful flowers which grew out of the Poet's poisoned imagination,—the price of his soul.

* * *

The brooklets ripple through the park of the Alhambra. Merry little brooklets that murmur and gurgle! In their narrow pebbled beds they hurriedly flow past, as quickly as the happy hours in the poet's life glided by him;—those hours, or minutes, perhaps, in which he could be innocently happy.

Then he would dream a merry dream,—perhaps of the man with the wonderful big nose which charmed the whole world, which artists painted and princesses kissed. In this delightful little story, which in its bizarre style is a forerunner of Mark Twain's (only that with Poe the grotesque exaggerations appear much finer, much more natural) there is no ostentation of wordplay.

He laughs at the poor man's meals which the weekly papers dish up to their good natured readers, he teaches Miss Zenobia

how to write a clever article for Blackwood's Magazine, permits the most worthy Mr. Thingum Bob of the "Lantern" to gossip entertainingly about his literary adventures. So light, so amiable, and so ingratiating is the Poet's wit,—like the little springs which merrily gurgle through the park of the Alhambra!

* * *

But like the nightingale, he sobs forth his dreams of longing. And his voice seems formed from out of the nightingale's soul, so pure, so spotless. Saint Cecilia would fain break her violin with envy, and Apollo shatter his lyre. If the Poet found no hell too deep for his dream of crime, no heaven was too high for his songs of beauty.

In none of Poe's works do we find one sentence, one little allusion based upon sexual love. To no other poet was eroticism as foreign as to Poe, except possibly Scheerbart.

Just as little can we find one strain of social sentiment in his works. And yet there is a heart in his breast, which longs for

love, to which love's communications are an absolute necessity. It is only that he cannot love man, because he sees the little faults which repel him on all sides, which cause him to refuse the hand held out for love's caresses, and to silence the flattering word on his lips. Then he turns his longing to do good towards animals—pats the dog, feeds the hungry cat, and is thankful for a faithful look, for a satisfied purring. How conscious the Poet was of all this is seen in his tale, "The Black Cat," in which he emphasizes his love of animals, and says that he "derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure." If it was one of the "principal sources of pleasure" in a poor life, it was certainly one of the few, that did not mingle pleasure with pain,—for the pure love for his dying wife but caused him joys mingled only with frightful tortures.

The Edgar Allan Poe that is Roderick Usher had, like the angel Israfil of the Koran, a lute in place of his heart. When he looked at his beloved wife, his heart sobbed, and his lute sang: it sang pure songs

of longing, whose tones sound in one's ears with sweetest thrills—it sang pure tales of Morella and Berenice—of Lenore and Ligeia. The same inner music which throbs through the Raven, and Ulalume, and which is perhaps the highest in Art, echoes through these poems in prose; and the words with which the Poet accompanied his "Song of the Universe" is meant also for these tones: "They cannot die; or if by any means they be now trodden down so that they die, they will rise again to the Life Everlasting."

Yes, they have eternal worth; they will live through the short space of life which we mortals call everlasting; which, however, is the highest to which even a human being can attain, even in all times to come.

Poe's value as a poet has not at any time been greater than in our own, for in our time, particularly in our period, he can teach us much. Poe is no longer a problem; he has become a personality, which lies clearly before all those who have the power to see. The consciousness of his art brought forth by intoxication, the emphasizing of the

meaning of technique, the clear recognition of the Parnassian principles of art in their broadest meaning, the powerful demonstration of the high value of the inner rhythm of all poetry; all these are moments, which have individually been accentuated by many others, though in their entirety, and in their penetrating relation, they have been recognized by no artist as by this New England poet—and as these moments represent that which can be called the furthering of the modern spirits in the art of culture in their entirety, the study of the works of Poe is more gratifying to the artist and to the educated layman than any other. That it is impossible to promote these studies by means of translations is obvious. One can grow to know and admire the artist through translations, but to penetrate into his innermost being, it is necessary to read him in the original form. This may be said of all poets, but of none more than of Poe.

* * *

The nightingales still sing, and from out

of their little throats bursts forth the voice of the Poet I love. The soft winds fold their wings—the leaves of the elms cease their rustling. Even the drizzling little rivulets stop their whisperings. The park of the Alhambra listens to the songs of the nightingales.

Through hundreds of years at eventide these sweet sounds have sung these old towers and walls to sleep, and today, too, they are still the same confiding notes, but different—very different. A dead Poet's lute-like heart is beating, and his soul's songs are sung by the little birds. So the brook and the trees listen, the red quarry stones are harkening—the purple glowing peaks of the snow capped mountains are listening too; an endless sigh floats through the great garden from out of the west. It is the glow of the setting sun, which is sadly taking leave of a Poet's sublime song.

The twilight breathes through the elm trees and filmy shadows of fog rise from the laurel bushes; they rise from out of the Moorish palace of spirits. In a long train

they file past us, and seat themselves about on the marble benches. I know very well who they are—they are poets of Granada, —Jews and Arabs. Very close to me sits Gabirol, then Ibnu-l-Khattib—and Ibn Esra and Jehuda ben Halevy and Mohammed Ibn Khaldûn, and Ibn Batuta. Hundreds of dead Poets are silently listening to the song of the nightingales. They all know what the grey little birds are singing today,—so do the dead understand. They hear the heart of the angel Israfil, of whom the Koran speaks, and praise God, who has awakened all these tones. *Oualâ ghâliba ill' Allâhta 'alâ*—murmur the misty shadows of the Alhambra.

And the nightingales sing of dark secrets, of the pure sources of life, and a great longing fills my soul. They sing of that secret thought which created all and penetrates all, of the world creating breath, which fills the whole universe with unending love. They sing of the beauty which only turns all truth into reality, of the dreams which only make life real.

Poe's soul is singing—and a hundred dead poets listen to the refrain. And from their lips fall again the ancient words—Oualâ ghâliba ill' Allâhta 'alâ—so grateful are the dead.

* * *

And night descends more deeply upon us. The nightingales are silent and the east wind rises over the Sierras; then the filmy shadows disappear; again I am alone in the magic garden of the Alhambra.—Alone with the soul of a great artist, and as the wind drives through the leaves the old elms rustle and sing of "Ulalume" strange ballad of the Poet's awful dream.

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisped and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere—
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.
Here once, through an alley Titanic
Of cypress I roamed with my soul— . . .

I know full well that it is I who speak

these lines, but I feel that my lips say nothing else than that which the elm trees whisper there. I feel—I feel—that it is the sad October song of the howling winds which a poet's heavenly longing has absorbed and crystallized into words. It is the absorption of the innermost sense of nature; it is a surrender of the soul to the universe, and at the same time a penetration into the universe, which is the primitive form of all existence. That is a slight proof of the poet's highest law of "unity as the origin of all things."

My lips repeat the secret words—which the wind carries to my ears. Fear overcomes me in this gloomy solitude, in which ages dim as fairy land are born again. I want to escape from the valley of the Alhambra. My foot errs, gropes in the dark, and loses its way, and as I reach the end of a lane of mighty cypress trees, I strike against a low gate. Fright teaches us to see in the dark.—I know, I know whose grave this is. And against my will, my lips repeat to my soul—

"What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?"
She replied—"Ulalume—Ulalume—
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!"

My terror grows. The soul of the dead Poet—which fluttered in the trees, which sounded in the song of the nightingale, which gurgled out of the little brooklets and which filled the wind's sad song,—it takes possession of me—of me; of an atom of the dust with which it is saturated. I know that this thought will annihilate me,—that I cannot escape from it, but I do not guard myself against it—and, strange, I grow quiet—so quiet that I am completely filled with it.

Slowly the small fears of mortals disperse.

* * *

Now I find my way again. I go through the Gates of the Vines to the Square of the Algibes. I go into the Alcazaba, mount the Ghafar, the mighty watch tower of the Moorish princes. A brilliant crescent of the moon glows between two hurrying clouds;—The old sign of Arabic greatness, which no God or Christ can wipe from

Heaven. I glance down into Granada, rich in churches, with its noisy swarming night life—its people running to coffee houses; reading newspapers, shining shoes, and having shoes shined. They look into well-lighted show windows, ride in tram-cars—their water carriers crying out and gathering cigar butts. They cry and hoot, quarrel and make peace again—and no living soul raises an eye—nobody glances upward to the glory here. The Darro roars to the right of me. In the back I hear the rushing of the Xenil. Bright rays of flame emerge from the Caves of the Gypsy Mountain, and to the other side, the snow-capped Sierras gleam silvery in the moonlight. Between the watch towers on which I stand and the purple towers of the Moorish Mountain, the sombre park lies deep in the valley. Farther back, with its halls upon halls, courtyards upon courtyards, lies the enchanted Palace of the Alhambra.

Down there the small life of this century noisily goes its way—up here is the land of dreams—and that down there—how distant,

how infinitely distant it is from me—and the land up here—is not each stone a part of my soul? Am I alone in this world of spirits, that does not sense that blind life below? Am I not a part of all these dreams? Almighty Beauty turns these dreams into verities. Here life blossoms and the truth below becomes a shadow play.

Deed is nothing—thought is all. Reality is ugly—and to the ugly is denied all right of existence. Dreams are beautiful, and are true because they are beautiful, and therefore I believe in dreams as in the only reality.

* * *

How did Edgar Allan Poe look?

There are men who radiate a special charm. They attract without wanting to, —one must believe in their personality, and then there is a certain quality which repels. One is not conscious what it consists of, but it is there. They are branded with the brand of Art. So was Oscar Wilde,—so was Edgar Allan Poe.

His figure was tall, his step light, and his

bearing always harmonious,—always noble in spite of his poverty. His proud features were regular; they were beautiful; the clear dark grey eyes had an odd violet sheen. The self-conscious forehead was high, and of wonderful proportion—his complexion was pale, and the locks that framed it were black. Edgar Allan Poe was beautiful in body and mind. His gentle voice sounded like music.

He was very supple and strong—skillful in all athletic sports, an indefatigable swimmer, who at one time swam from Richmond to Warwick, more than seven miles, without tiring, against the rapid tide; a trained athlete—a very fine rider, and an experienced fencer who often challenged an opponent in a fit of anger.

He was a gentleman from top to toe—his manner in company was fascinatingly amiable, yet, with all reserved. He was tender and gentle, yet earnest and firm. He was a scholar who possessed an almost universal education. To see him was as great a pleasure as to listen to him. He was always the donor, and it was his curse that

so few of all those on whom he lavished his rich gifts understood or appreciated them. A few beautiful women—understood him? —No, but they sensed his nobility of soul instinctively, as women always do. Three persons who lived in his time had the ability to comprehend him completely,—Baudelaire and the two Brownings—but they lived over there in Europe and he never met them.

So the Poet was alone in his solitary, lofty dreams.

And as he was beautiful, and above all, loved beauty, so everything that surrounded him had to be beautiful. He created magnificent beauties in dreams, which, to him, were real. In them he lived in Landor's costly country house or on the splendid estate at Arnheim, but also in his modest, every day life, in which he had to count the pennies, he knew how to create an atmosphere about him which called forth the admiration of the richest people.

His little cottage at Fordham, in which he lived at the side of the doomed wife,

though a Paradise of Torture, was permeated by a wonderful harmony, which charmed all visitors. Dilapidated furniture stood about, yet even thus it seemed pleasing and beautiful. It was a miserable hut on the peak of a little hill, but blooming cherry trees stood on the green meadows; early in the morning little song-birds enticed the Poet to the nearby pine woods. Then he paced among his gay dahlia bushes and inhaled the sweet perfume of the mignonette and heliotrope. The gentle morning breeze kissed his damp brow, caressed his tired eyes, which had kept watch at the couch of his slowly dying beloved, during the long night. He went to the high bridge over the Harlem River, or to the rocky cliffs shaded by old cedars, and dreamed there, gazing out on the landscape.

Now he rests—somewhere. The day after his death they buried him in the Westminster Churchyard in Baltimore. Like a criminal vagrant they picked him from the street and buried him the next day. His grave is supposed to be close to that of his

grandfather's—General David Poe, who made a name for himself in the War of Independence. Thereabouts he is supposed to lie. One does not know the spot, exactly—no cross, no gravestone arises on the place—no human being bothers about it. His countrymen have other cares; what interest have they in a dead Poet?—For about a week they talked of the unfortunate departed—to besmirch—to calumniate his memory. All of the lies which are still circulated about him originated at this time. A whole flood of poisoned ink was poured over the dead lion. All the mediocrities fell on him, the envious little scribblers whom he had mercilessly torn to pieces, concurred in the war cry of the lying clergyman Griswold.—"He died in a fit of drunkenness! —He drank, he drank, he drank."—Then they forgot him, and it was better so; his countrymen had not matured enough to appreciate their great Poet.

Are they able to recognize him today? After a hundred years they will gather the rotting bones; they will erect a mighty monu-

ment and write thereon—"The United States to its great Poet"—

Let them keep the bones in America. We (in Europe) will listen to the Poet's soul, which lives in the nightingales' throats in the Alhambra.

* * *

THE END

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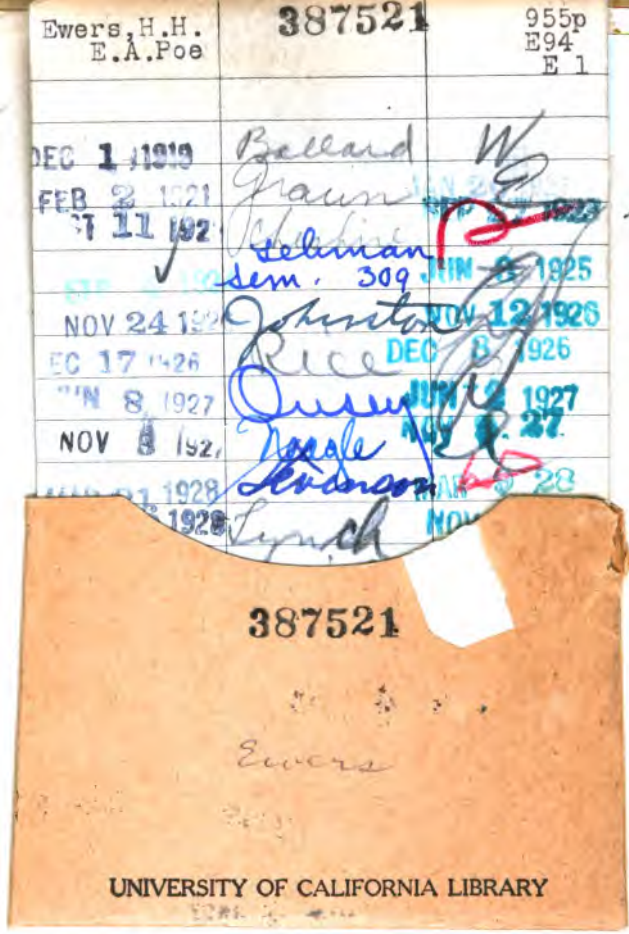

Ewers, H.H.
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DEC 1 1919 Ballard W
FEB 2 1921 Graun
OCT 11 192 Chalice
Seliman
Sem. 309
JUN 8 1925
NOV 24 192 Johnston
NOV 12 1926
DEC 17 1926 Rice
DEC 8 1926
JUN 8 1927 Ousen
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